

CHAPTER IV.

There was no sleep for Captain Chester the rest of the night. He went home, threw off his sword belt and seated him self in a big easy chair before his fireplace, deep in thought. Once or twice he arose and paced restlessly up and down the room, as he had done in his excited talk with Rollins some few hours before. Then he was simply angry and argumentative or declamatory. Now he had settled down into a very different frame of mind. He seemed awed, stunned, crushed. He had all the bearing and mien of one who, having defiantly predicted a calamity, was thunderstruck by the verification of his

In all his determined arraignment of Mr. Jerrold, in all the harsh things he had said and thought of him, he had never imagined any such depth of secoundrelism as the revelations of the night foreshadowed. Chester differed it." from many of his brotherhood. There was no room for rejoicing in his heart that the worst he had ever said of Jerrold was unequal to the apparent truth. He took no comfort to his soul that those who called him cynical, crabbed, unjust, even malicious, would now be compelled to admit he was right in his estimate. Like the best of us, Chester could not ordinarily say "Vade retro" to the temptation to think, if not to say, "Didn't I tell you so?" when in were proved well founded. But in the face of such a catastrophe as now appeared engulfing the fair fame of his duty in the light of the discoveries he you don't come out.' had made? To the best of his belief, he was the only man in the garrison who and yet half laughing, Adonis rolled had evidence of Jerrold's absence from from his couch and began to get into his his own quarters and of the presence of clothes. Chester's blood ran cold, then some one at her window. He had taken | boiled. Think of a man who could laugh prompt measures to prevent its being like that and remember! When, how, suspected by others. He purposely sent | had he returned to the house? Listen! his guards to search along the cliff in the opposite direction, while he went to Jerrold's room and thence back to re-couldn't you let a man sleep? I'm tired move the telltale ladder. Should he tell, half to death." any one until he had confronted Jerrold with the evidence of his guilt, and the confidence of Colonel Maynard. He her." sence, however—had been away some would not return, it was known, until

er and sister to the new home he had

purchased for them in the distant east.

It was to his company that Jerrold had

been promoted, and there was friction

from the very week that the handsome

subaltern joined. Armitage had long before "taken his measure" and was in no wise pleased that so lukewarm a soldier should have come to him as senior subaltern. They had a very plain talk, for Armitage was straightforward as a dart, and then, as Jerrold showed occasional lapses, the captain shut down on some of his most cherished privileges, and, to the indig- never tell." nation of society, the failure of Mr. Jerreld to appear at one or two gatherings where he was confidently expected was speedily laid at his captain's door. The recent death of his father kept Armitage from appearing in public, and, as neither he nor the major (who commanded the regiment while Maynard was abroad) vouchsafed the faintest explanation, society was allowed to form its own conclusions and did to the effect that Mr. Jerrold was a woonged and persecuted man. It was just as the Maynards arrived at Sibley that Armitage departed on his leave, and, to his unspeakable bliss, Mr. Jerrold succeeded to the command of his company. This fact, coupled with the charming relations which were straightway established with the colonel's family, placed him in a position of independence and gave him opportunities he had never known before. It was speedily evident that he was neglecting his military duties, that Company B was running down up, and yet no man felt like speaking of it to the colonel, who saw it only occasionally on dress parade. Chester had about determined to write to Armitage himself and suggest his speedy return when this eventful night arrived. Now he fully made up his mind it must be done at once and had seated himself at his desk when the roar of the sunrise gun and the blare of the bugles warned him that reveille had come and he must again go to his guard. Before he returned to his quarters another complication, even more embarrassing, had arisen, and the letter to Armitage was postponed. He had received the "present" of his

guard and verified the presence of all his prisoners when he saw Major Sloat still standing out in the middle of the parade, where the adjutant usually received the reports of the roll calls. Several company officers, having made their reports, were sourrying back to quarters for another snooze before breakfast time or to get their cup of coffee before going out to the range. Chester strolled over toward him.

"What's the matter, Sloat?" "Nothing much. The colonel told me to receive the reveille reports for Hoyt this week. He's on general court martial.

"Yes, I know all that, I mean, what are you waiting for?" "Mr. Jerrold again. There's no re-

port from his company." "Have you sent to wake him?" "No: I'll go myself and do it thoroughly too." And the little major turned sharply away and walked direct to the low range of bachelor quarters,

dived under the piazza and into the

green doorway. Hardly knowing how to explain his action, Chester quickly followed and in less than a minute was standing in the selfsame parlor which, by the light of a flickering match, he had searched two hours before. Here he halted and listened, while Sloat pushed on into the bedroom and was heard vehemently

apostrophizing some sleeper: Does the government pay you for this sort of thing, I want to know? Get up, Jerrold. This is the second time you've cut reveille in ten days. Get up, I say!" And the major was vigorously shaking at something, for the bed

creaked and groaned. "Wake up, I say! I'm blowed if I'm going to get up here day after day and have you sleeping. Wake, Nicodemus! Wake, you snoozing, snoring, open mouthed masher. Come now; I mean

A drowsy, disgusted yawn and stretch finally rewarded his efforts. Mr. Jerrold at last opened his eyes, rolled over, yawned sulkily again and tried to evade his persecutor, but to no purpose. Like a little terrier, Sloat hung onto him and worried and shook.

"Oh, don't, d—n it, don't!" growled the victim. "What do you want anyway? Has that infernal reveille gone?'

"Yes, and you're absent again, and no report from B company. By the holy everyday affairs his oft disputed views | poker, if you don't turn out and get it and report to me on the parade I'll spot the whole gang absent, and then no matinee for you today, my buck. Come, regiment and the honor of those whom out with you! I mean it. Hall says his colonel held dear, Chester could feel you and he have an engagement in only dismay and grief. What was his town, and 'pon my soul I'll bust it if

And so, growing and complaining.

"Confound you, Sloat! I wouldn't

"What have you done to tire you? Slept all yesterday afternoon and wringing from him his resignation send danced perhaps a dozen times at the him far from the post before handing doctor's last night. You've had more it in? Time and again he wished Frank | sleep than I've had, begad! You took Armitage were here. The youngest cap- Miss Renwick home before 'twas zear, tain in the regiment, Armitage had and mean it was of you, too, with all been for years its adjutant and deep in | the fellows that wanted to dance with

reliant, courageous man, and one for nard made her promise to be home at whom Chester had ever felt a warm | 12. You old cackler, that's what sticks esteem. Armitage was on leave of ab- in your crop yet. You are persecuting me because they like me so much better time on account of family matters and | than they do you," he went on, laughingly now, "Come, now, Sloat, confess, he had effected the removal of his moth- it is all because you're jealous. You couldn't have that picture, and I could."

Chester fairly started. He had urgent need to see this young gallant. He was staying for that purpose, but should be listen to further talk like this? Too late to move, for Sloat's answer came like a

"I bet you you never could!" "But didn't I tell von I had a week

'Aye, but I didn't believe it. You couldn't show it!" "Pshaw, man! Look here. Stop, though. Remember, on your honor, you

"On my honor, of course." "Well, there!" A drawer was opened. Chester heard a gulp of dismay, of genuine astonishment and conviction mixed, as Sloat muttered some half articulate words

angry change of color. "I did not know you were here," he

and then came into the front room.

Jerrold followed, caught sight of Chester

"It was to find where you were that

I came," was the quiet answer. There was a moment's silence. Sloat turned and looked at the two men in ntter surprise. Up to this time he had considered Jerrold's absence from reweille as a mere dereliction of duty which was ascribable to the laziness and indifference of the young officer. So far as lay in his power, he meant to make him attend more strictly to business and had therefore come to his quarters and stirred him up. But there was much faster than Armitage had built it | no thought of any serious trouble in his mind. Histalk had all been roughly good humored until-until that bet was mentioned, and then it became earnest. Now, as he glanced from one man to the other, he saw in an instant that something new-something of unusual gravity-was impending. Chester, buttoned to the throat in his dark uniform, accurately gloved and belted, with pale, set, almost haggard face, was standing by the center table under the droplight. Jerrold, only half dressed, his feet thrust into slippers, his fingers nervously working at the studs of his dainty white shirt, had stopped short at his bedroom door, and with features that grew paler every second and a dark scowl on his brow was glowering at Chester.

"Since when has it been the duty of the officer of the day to come around and hunt up officers who don't happen to be out at reveille?" he asked.

"It is not your absence from reveille want explained, Mr. Jerrold," was the cold and deliberative answer. "I wanted you at 3:30 this morning, and

you were not and had not been here." An unmistakable start and shock: a quick, nervous, hunted glance around the room so cold and pallid in the early bared throat. But he rallied gamely, strode a step forward and looked his superior full in the face. Sloat marked the effort with which he cleared away the huskiness that seemed to clog his larynx, but admired the spunk with which the young officer returned the

senfor's shot "What is your authority here, I would saluted as the young officer approached.

like to know? What business has the officer of the day to want me or any other man not on guard? Captain Chester, you seem to forget that I am no longer your second lieutenant and that I am | and they're just gone." a company commander like yourself. fairly snapping.

Chester leaned upon the table and deliberated a moment. He stood there coldly, distrustfully eying the excited lieutenant, then turned to Sloat:

"I will be responsible for the roll call have a matter of grave importance to it is of a private nature. Will you let me see him alone?"

"Sloat," said Jerrold, "don't go yet. I want you to stay. These are my quarters, and I recognize your right to come here in search of me, since I was not at confounded by this intrusion of Captain Chester, to grasp the situation. I never heard of such a thing as this. Explain it if you can."

"Mr. Jerrold, what I have to ask or not an official matter. It is as man to man I want to see you, alone and at once. Now will you let Major Sloat retire?

Silence for a moment. The angry finsh on Jerrold's face died away, and in its place an ashen pallor was spreading from throat to brow. His lips were twitching ominously. Sloat looked in consternation at the sudden change.

"Shall I go?" he finally asked. Jerrold looked long, fixedly, searchingly in the set face of the officer of the day, breathing hard and heavily. What he saw there Sloat could not imagine. At last his hand dropped by his side, He made a little motion with it-a slight wave toward the door-and again dropped it nervously. His lips seemed to frame the word "Go," but he never glanced at the man whom a moment before he so masterfully bade to stay, and Sloat, sorely puzzled, left the room. Not until his footsteps had died out of hearing did Chester speak;

"How soon can you leave the post?" "I don't understand you," "How soon can you pack up what you need to take and—get away?" .
"Get away where? What on earth

do vou mean?" "You must know what I mean! You must know that after last night's work you quit the service at once and for-

"I don't know anything of the kind, and I defy you to prove the faintest thing." But Jerrold's fingers were twitching, and his eyes had lost their

"Do you suppose I did not recogniza you?" asked Chester.

"When—where?" gulped Jerrold. "When I seized you and you struck

"I never struck you. I don't know what you mean."

"My God, man, let us end this useess fencing. The evidence I have of your last night's scoundrelism would He found the gray mustached subaltern break the strongest record. For the regiment's sake-for the colonel's sake -let us have no public scandal. It's awful enough as the thing stands. Write your resignation, give it to me and leave-before breakfast, if you can. " "

"I've done nothing to resign for. You know perfectly well I haven't." "Do you mean that such a crimethat a woman's ruin and disgrace—isn't enough to drive you from the service?" asked Chester, tingling in every nerve and longing to clinch the shapely, swelling threat in his clutching fingers. 'God of heaven, Jerrold, are you dead to all sense of decency?"

"Captain Chester, I won't be bullied this way. I may not be immaculate, but no man on earth shall talk to me like this! I deny your insinuation. I've done nothing to warrant your words, even if -if you did come sneaking around here last night and find me absent. You can't prove a thing. You"---

"What! When I saw you-almost caught you! By heaven, I wish the sentry had killed you then and there! I never dreamed of such hardihood."

and stopped short, with sudden and "You've done nothing but dream. By Jove, I believe you're sleep walking yet! What on earth do you mean by eatching and killing me? 'Pon my soul, I reckon you're crazy, Captain Chester. ' And color was gradually coming back to Jerrold's face and confidence to his

"Enough of this, Mr. Jerrold. Knowing what you and I both know, do you reface to hand me your resignation?"

"Of course I do." "Do you mean to deny to me where I

saw you last night?" "I deny your right to question me. I deny anything-everything. I believe you simply thought you had a clew and could make me tell. Suppose I was out last night. I don't believe you know the faintest throg about it."

"Do you want me to report the whole

thing to the colonel?" "Of course I don't. Naturally I want him to know nothing about my being out of quarters, and it's a thing that no officer would think of reporting another for. You'll only win the contempt of every gentleman in the regiment if you do it. What good will it do you? Keep me from going to town for a few days, I suppose. What earthly business is it of yours anyway?"

"Jerrold, I can stand this no longer. I ought to shoot you in your tracks, I believe. You've brought rain and misery to the home of my warmest friend and dishonor to the whole service, and you talk of two or three days' stoppage from going to town! If I can't bring you to your senses, by God, the colonel shall!" And he wheeled and left the

For a moment Jerrold stood stunned and silent. It was useless to attempt reply. The captain was far down the walk when he sprang to the door to call him again. Then, hurrying back to the bedroom, he hastily dressed, muttering angrily and anxiously to himself as he light of the August morning; a clutch did so. He was thinking deeply, too, of Jerrold's slim, brown hand at the and every movement betrayed nervousness and trouble. Returning to the front door, he gazed out upon the parade, then took his forage cap and walked rapidly down toward the adjutant's office. The orderly bugler was tilted up in a chair, leaning half asleep against the whitewashed front, but his was a weasel nap, for he sprang up and

"Where did Major Sloat go, orderly?" was the harried question. "Over toward the stables, sir. Him and Captain Chester was here together,

"Run over to the quarters of B com-Do you come by Colonel Maynard's pany and tell Merrick I want him right order to search my quarters and question away. Tell him to come to my quar-me? If so, say so at once. It not, get ters." And thither Mr. Jerrold reout." And Jerrold's face was grow- turned, seated himself at his desk, wrote ing back with wrath, and his big, lus- several lines of a note, tore it into fragtrous eyes were wide awake now and ments, began again, wrote another which seemed not entirely satisfactory and was in the midst of a third when there came a quick step and a knock at the door. Opening the shutters, he glanced out of the window. A gust of wind sent some of the papers whirling of Company B this morning, Sloat. I and flying, and the bedroom door banged

shut, but not before some few half bring up to this-this gentleman, and sheets of paper had fluttered out upon the parade, where other little flurries of the morning breeze sent them sailing over toward the colonel's quarters Anxious only for the coming of Merrick and no one else, Mr. Jerrold no sooner saw who was at the front door than h reveille, but I want a witness here to closed the shutters, called, "Come in!" bear me out. I'm too amazed yet, too and a short, squat, wiry little man, dressed in the fatigue uniform of the infantry, stood at the doorway to the hall.

"Come in here, Merrick," said the lieutenant, and Merrick came. "How say to you cancerns you alone. It is much is it you owe me now-thirty odd dollars, I think?"

"I believe it is, lientenant," answered the man, with shifting eyes and general uneasiness of mien.

"You are not ready to pay it, I suppose, and you got it from me when we left Fort Raines to help you out of that scrape there," The soldier looked down and made

no answer. "Merrick, I want a note taken to



"Merrick, I want a note taken to town at

and get it to its address before 8 o'clock. I want you to say no word to a soul. Here's \$10. Hire old Murphy's horse across the river and go. If you are put in the guardhouse when you get back, don't say a word. If you are tried by garrison court for crossing the bridge or absence without leave, plead guilty, make no defense, and I'll pay you double your fine and let you off the \$30. But if you fail me or tell a soul of your arrand I'll write to-you know who, at Raines. Do you understand and agree?" "I do. Yes, sir."

"Go and get ready and be here in 10 minutes."

Meantime Captain Chester had followed Sloat to the adjutant's office. He was boiling over with indignation, which he hardly knew how to control tramping in great perplexity up and down the room, and the instant he entered was greeted with the inquiry: "What's gone wrong? What's Jer-

rold been doing?" "Don't ask me any questions, Sloat, but answer. It is a matter of honor. What was your bet with Jerrold?" "I oughtn't to tell that, Chester. Surely it cannot be a matter mixed up

with this. "I can't explain, Sloat. What I ask is unavoidable. Tell me about that

"Why, he was so superior and airy, you know, and was trying to make me feel that he was so much more intimate with them all at the colonel's, and that he could have that picture for the mere asking, and I got mad and bet him he never could.

"Was that the day you shook hands on it?"

"Yes " "And that was her picture-the picture then-he showed you this morn-

"Chester, you heard the conversation. You were there. You know that I'm on honor not to tell.' "Yes, I know. That's quite enough.

[TO BE CONTINUED.] A Stumper.



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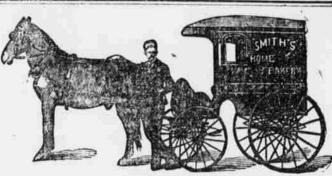
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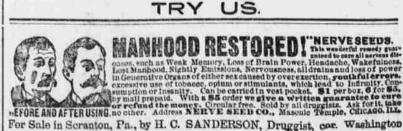
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